



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

22 JUNE 2022

**PONTYPRIDD TOWN CENTRE PLACEMAKING PLAN –
PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK AND PROJECT UPDATES**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR
MARK NORRIS)**

Author: Andrea Virgo

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to:

- 1.1 Set out the headline results of the public consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the draft Pontypridd Town Centre Placemaking Plan and the early ideas for redevelopment of the former M&S and Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings;
- 1.2 In addition, this report seeks Cabinet to approve the Pontypridd Town Centre Placemaking Plan and the proposed changes and also the further development and delivery of schemes as set out within the document.
- 1.3 Provide an update on the proposed procurement exercise to secure a development partner to deliver a hotel led development on the site of the former Bingo Hall on High Street / Sardis Road.
- 1.4 Highlight progress made towards the demolition plans for the former M&S and Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Considers the responses to the public consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the draft Pontypridd Placemaking Plan and the early ideas for the redevelopment of the former M&S and Dorothy Perkins/Burtons

buildings and determines whether any amendments are required to the proposals.

- 2.2 Approve the Pontypridd Town Centre Placemaking Plan (subject to any changes as result of the consultation process) and the further development and delivery of schemes as set out within the document.
- 2.3 Note the progress made towards undertaking a procurement exercise to secure a development partner to deliver a hotel led development on the site of the former Bingo Hall on High Street / Sardis Road.
- 2.4 Note progress made towards the demolition plans of the former M&S and Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Significant investment is already underway in Pontypridd Town Centre and with continued investment and a co-ordinated approach it is envisaged that Pontypridd will become a key economic, social and cultural centre.
- 3.2 The draft Pontypridd Placemaking Plan illustrates the scale of opportunity that exists within the town and at a meeting of the Cabinet on 28th February 2022, it was agreed that consultation on the draft plan and on the early ideas for redevelopment of the former Marks & Spencer and Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings should be undertaken.
- 3.3 Cabinet also agreed that formal procurement to secure a development partner to deliver a hotel led development on the site of the former Bingo Hall on High Street/Sardis Road should be progressed.
- 3.4 It was also agreed by Cabinet that a funding application should be submitted to Welsh Government to demolish the vacant and dilapidated M&S and Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings and to commence the demolition process if and when funding and any necessary statutory consents are in place.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 As with many town centres throughout the UK, Pontypridd town centre has faced significant challenges to its economic viability in recent years. Despite this, Pontypridd town centre has proven to be incredibly resilient and significant progress has been made in the delivery of major regeneration projects and initiatives over recent years.

- 4.2 Between 2017 and 2021, nearly £115m investment was made against the priorities of the Regeneration Framework *'Pivotal Pontypridd – Delivering Growth'* and the success of this framework was fundamental in the development of its successor *'Pontypridd Town Centre Placemaking Plan (Draft)'*.
- 4.3 The draft Placemaking Plan builds upon the foundations of what has already been delivered and provides a framework for delivering new development and investment to further improve the prosperity of Pontypridd, enhance the townscape and make it even more resilient to future change.
- 4.4 Following approval by Cabinet at its February meeting, a 4-week public consultation exercise on the draft Placemaking Plan, with a particular focus on the early ideas for the redevelopment of the former M&S and Dorothy Perkins/Burtens buildings was undertaken.

5. DRAFT PONTYPRIDD PLACEMAKING PLAN - SUMMARY

- 5.1 'Placemaking' is an overarching approach to improving how a place looks, functions and is experienced and the draft plan illustrates the scale of opportunity that exists in the town.
- 5.2 To guide future investment, the plan identifies the following core ambitions for the town centre:
- **A BUSINESS DESTINATION** with established development areas that provide striking gateways to the town and a series of flexible workspaces that combine to make Pontypridd an attractive place to invest and work.
 - **A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE** with a choice of high quality new homes, accessible jobs and a bespoke leisure offer delivered in an unique riverside setting.
 - **CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE** with excellent pedestrian connections between the town centre and the railway and bus stations and high-quality cycle infrastructure that establishes the town as base to explore the wider valleys landscape.
 - **A GREEN WATERSIDE TOWN** with a unique outlook over the River Taff and the historic Ynysangharad War Memorial Park that provide an unrivalled leisure and recreational setting and distinctive landscape.

- **A UNIQUE TOWNSCAPE** with iconic heritage buildings that are celebrated and have been reused to accommodate a mix of vibrant modern uses.
- **A CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DESTINATION** with an annual programme of events for Pontypridd that attract visitors and establish the centre as a unique cultural and social destination.
- **AN INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT TOWN** with a network of unique streets and spaces that are safe and accessible, resilient and adaptable to future challenges, optimised views of the unique townscape and riverside setting and provide space for outdoor activity.

5.3 The plan takes an overarching view of the key areas that make up the town centre and proposes a series of approaches that would strengthen the sense of place in each of the following five spatial areas that have been identified as areas of specific focus for development:

SOUTHERN GATEWAY - A redeveloped gateway to the town including the former Bingo Hall site and Marks and Spencer/Dorothy Perkins stores, enhanced links between the station and the high street and an improved public realm that opens the entrance to the town and establishes a riverside plaza.

TOWN CENTRE CORE - A reinforced core of refurbished buildings that will provide workspace, homes, retail and leisure uses, a riverside walkway and better pedestrian connections and spaces.

MARKET QUARTER - A bespoke Market Quarter within the Town Centre Core that includes a rejuvenated market building and a unique retail and leisure offer in an historic setting, creating a destination in its own right within the heart to the town centre.

NORTHERN GATEWAY - Continued regeneration of the northern gateway to the town that includes a rejuvenated bus station, explores the potential for a new train halt, further workspace and mixed-use development at Berw Road, enhanced art and culture and better pedestrian routes.

YNYSANGHARAD WAR MEMORIAL PARK - A heritage park that has a natural riverside setting, diverse sport and recreational offer, is a hub for cultural and social events and base from which to explore the Valleys Regional Park.

5.4 The plan also proposes a series of projects and interventions that collectively are aimed at transforming the town centre. In summary these projects will:

- Create distinctive and welcoming entrances into the town centre.
- Redevelop vacant or dilapidated sites and premises for new commercial uses.
- Deliver improved links between public transport services and high-quality cycle infrastructure.
- Restore traditional buildings with a range of new uses.
- Create new public spaces that link the town to the River Taf and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park.
- Make the town centre more resilient to potential future flood events.
- Deliver more tree planting and green infrastructure.
- Provide better pedestrian routes and create spaces for social and cultural events that people can enjoy, and which businesses can use.
- Develop a stronger digital presence.

6. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Views on the draft Placemaking Plan and the Southern Gateway concept masterplan which contains redevelopment plans for the former Bingo Hall and Marks & Spencer and Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings, were sought from a broad range of stakeholders via a 4 week consultation exercise. The consultation was conducted in-house and ran from the 1st March to 29th March 2022.
- 6.2 A range of engagement methods and tools were used including a dedicated 'Let's Talk Pontypridd' website, engagement events held in the town centre and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, visits to businesses and organisations in the town centre, an exhibition at Pontypridd Library, email notification to key stakeholders, a press release and regular social media posts.
- 6.3 In total, 164 survey responses were received, with a further 135 responses to the "Quick Poll" questions and 70 contributions to an open text "Ideas" function on the 'Let's Talk Pontypridd' website.
- 6.4 8 written responses via email were received, including responses from local businesses, Councillors, Pontypridd Town Council, Your

Pontypridd Business Improvement District (BID), staff and Friends of the Earth, Pontypridd.

- 6.5 The headline findings of the consultation exercise are summarised below in paragraphs 6.6 to 6.16 with the detailed analysis and range of comments received presented at Appendix 1.
- 6.6. **Core Ambitions** - The draft Placemaking Plan presents an exciting and ambitious vision based on the seven core ambitions as previously detailed in paragraph 5.2.

When asked whether they agreed or disagreed with these ambitions, over 50% of the respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with each of the ambitions:

- **A Business Destination** - 56.7% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **A Great Place to Live** - 74.4% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Connected and Accessible** - 76.7% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **A Green Waterside Town** - 62.9% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **A Unique Townscape** - 60.9% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **A Cultural and Social Destination** - 57.2% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **An Inclusive and Resilient Town** - 60.1% strongly agreed / agreed.

- 6.7 **Spatial Areas** - Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed that investment in each of the five spatial areas, as described in paragraph 5.3, is important for the economic regeneration of the town centre.

A high majority of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the need for investment in each of the spatial areas:-

- **Southern Gateway** - 84.1% strongly agreed / agreed. **Town Centre Core** - 91.1% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Market Quarter** - 78.3% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Northern Gateway** - 73.3% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Ynysangharad War Memorial Park** - 78.2% strongly agreed / agreed.

- 6.8 **Projects and Initiatives** - Respondents were asked to indicate how much they agreed / disagreed with the proposed projects and initiatives that collectively are aimed at transforming the town centre.

A high majority agreed with all proposals as shown below:-

- **Create distinctive and welcoming entrances into the town centre** – 81.4% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Redevelop vacant or dilapidated sites and premises for new commercial uses** – 94.3% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Deliver improved links between public transport services and high-quality cycle infrastructure** – 74.2% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Restore traditional buildings with a range of new uses** – 90.3% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Create new public spaces that link the town to the River Taf and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park** – 85.3% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Make the town centre more resilient to potential future flood events** – 92.3% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Deliver more tree planting and green infrastructure** – 79.6% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Provide better pedestrian routes and create spaces for social and cultural events that people can enjoy, and which businesses can use** – 90.1% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Develop a stronger digital presence** – 59.4% strongly agreed / agreed.

6.9 **Southern Gateway Masterplan** - This is the first area that people experience when entering the town from the south, including from Pontypridd Railway Station. Currently the area is not fulfilling its potential and there is the opportunity to deliver development on a major scale.

6.10 The concept masterplan proposes significant redevelopment of key prominent sites including the former Bingo Hall site and Marks and Spencer/Dorothy Perkins stores. It also proposes enhanced links between the station and the high street and an improved public realm that opens the entrance to the town and establishes a riverside plaza.

6.11 Redevelopment of this 'Southern Gateway' area will form Phase 1 of the implementation of the Placemaking Plan and respondents were asked to view the concept masterplan and indicate how much they agreed / disagreed that the proposed development of these sites will have a positive impact in kick-starting the transformation of the area.

6.12 A high majority agreed with the proposed development of all three sites as shown below:

- **Former Bingo Hall / Angharads Nightclub** - 88.4% strongly agreed / agreed.
- **Former Marks & Spencer Building** - 90.9% strongly agreed / agreed.

- **Former Dorothy Perkins/Burtons Buildings** - 89.7% strongly agreed / agreed.

6.13 In addition to seeking views on the content of the draft placemaking plan, respondents were asked how they currently view a number of key aspects of the town centre.

The results show that *access to services / cafes, restaurants, bars / ease of walking around the town centre and transport links* were seen mostly as positive with *car parking / cultural activities and events / physical appearance / lack of public conveniences and the retail offer* viewed mostly as negative.

6.14 The consultation survey concluded with respondents being asked whether they agreed that implementation of the placemaking plan would result in more people being attracted to Pontypridd as a place to work, live and visit and that the economy of the town centre and surrounding areas will significantly benefit from its implementation. Encouragingly, over 70% of respondents agreed with these statements.

6.15 Overall, the response to the consultation exercise has been very positive and clearly supports the implementation of the placemaking plan. Some valuable suggestions have also been received such as the need to strengthen the plan in respect of tackling climate change and integration of the Welsh Language. As such, the plan has been updated to reflect this feedback.

6.16 Where negative aspects in respect of the town centre have been highlighted such as anti-social behaviour, lack of public conveniences and overall cleanliness of the town, these issues will be fully considered moving forward.

7. PROJECT PROGRESS UPDATE

7.1 As noted previously, implementation of the Southern Gateway Masterplan will form phase 1 of the implementation of the placemaking plan. Redevelopment of the key sites and premises detailed below will kickstart the transformation with further elements such as the riverside plaza to follow.

7.2 Former Bingo Hall / Angharads Nightclub

7.3 Cabinet agreed at its meeting of 28th February, that a formal procurement exercise to secure a development partner to deliver a hotel led development on this site should be progressed over the next 6 months.

- 7.4 Significant work has since been underway to prepare the necessary tender documentation and it is anticipated that the formal procurement exercise will commence in July of this year.
- 7.5 In addition, to facilitate site mobilisation the Council acquired the properties at 13 - 17 Sardis Road and 103 - 110 Taff Street in March 2022 with financial support from Welsh Governments Transforming Towns Programme.
- 7.6 Ownership of these properties provides the opportunity for more space to undertake construction of the hotel development and officers are currently engaging with the business in these properties.
- 7.7 A further report will be presented following conclusion of the formal procurement exercise.

7.8 Former Marks & Spencer and Dorothy Perkins / Burtons Buildings

- 7.9 Cabinet agreed at its meeting of 28th February, that a funding application should be submitted to Welsh Government for the demolition of the vacant and dilapidated M&S and Dorothy Perkins/Burttons buildings and to commence the demolition process, if and when, funding and any necessary statutory consents are in place.
- 7.10 To date, the funding application to Welsh Government has not been able to progress as guidance is still awaited on their new 3-year funding programme and associated application requirements. However once received, a funding application can be quickly progressed.
- 7.11 In the meantime, preparatory work has continued, and a multi-disciplinary team led by Rhomco Consulting Limited has been appointed to progress the survey and demolition design works.
- 7.12 A detailed programme will be produced and reviewed over the coming weeks.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening form was prepared prior to the consultation exercise being undertaken. The results of the consultation will be used to complete the full equality impact assessment and to determine any amendments to the Placemaking Plan.

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The results of consultation will be used to complete the Welsh Language Impact Assessment and to determine any amendments that need to be made to the Placemaking Plan.

10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 10.1 Section 6 details the public consultation exercise that was undertaken during the period 1st March to 29th March 2022 in respect of the draft Pontypridd Town Centre Placemaking Plan. Further consultation and engagement will however be undertaken as project ideas are developed.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 11.1 There are no financial implications in respect of the development of the Pontypridd Town Centre Placemaking Plan but as projects are developed, the financial implications will be fully assessed and reported as appropriate.
- 11.2 It is anticipated that funding for the proposed hotel led development will be provided by the procured Development Partner. Should any funding contribution be required from the Council, external funding opportunities will be explored and this will be subject to a future report.
- 11.3 As soon as funding guidance has been received from Welsh Government, a grant application for a 70% contribution towards demolition costs of the former M&S and Dorothy Perkins/Burtens buildings and the cost of the multi-disciplinary team noted in paragraph 7.11 will be made. It is anticipated that the balance will be funded from existing Prosperity and Development budgets.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 12.1 There are no current legal implications, but as the opportunities are developed, the legal implications will be fully assessed.

13. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 13.1 The Placemaking Plan has been developed in accord with the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 'Making a Difference' which highlights that its town centres will be vibrant, thriving places where people wish to live, work and socialise and with Welsh Governments 'Town Centres First'

approach, aimed at putting the health of town centres at the heart of the decisions taken by the public sector, businesses and communities.

- 13.2 All proposed developments within the plan will contribute to the goals of the Well Being of Future Generations Act. In particular, the economic and environmental well-being of Wales, supporting the delivery of a prosperous Wales, a more resilient Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

14. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

- 14.1 Successful implementation of the Placemaking Plan and its associated projects are of strategic significance to Rhondda Cynon Taf and the wider South East Wales region.

15. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

- 15.1 Successful delivery of the placemaking plan will result in transformational change for Pontypridd town centre. However, to achieve this, a coordinated effort between the public, private and third sectors will be required to realise the scale of opportunity and to succeed in delivering a dynamic, diverse and sustainable town centre where people are proud to live, work and visit.
- 15.2 The results of the public consultation exercise are not only fundamental in determining any changes and finalising the Placemaking Plan but also in determining where further engagement on specific projects and initiatives is required. For example, two key areas that have been identified as requiring further attention in the plan, as highlighted in paragraph 6.15, is our approach to tackling climate change and integration of the Welsh Language. It is however encouraging to note that a high majority of respondents to the consultation exercise are supportive of the overarching plan and the proposed projects and initiatives.
- 15.3 The formal procurement exercise to secure a development partner to deliver a hotel led development on the site of the former bingo hall on High Street / Sardis Road will commence in July and a further report outlining the results of the tender process will be presented.
- 15.4 Regular dialogue will continue with Welsh Government and an application to the Transforming Towns Programme for funding towards the demolition costs of the former M&S and Dorothy Perkins/Burtons buildings will be submitted at the earliest opportunity.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Derek James 01443 281115

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Item:

Background Papers

None.

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